

Little war episodes

Soldier's Diary -YK

~ Preface ~

The Great Patriotic War of 1941-1945 has long died down, its former participants are leaving, but the memory of those events continues to live among the people and will outlive generations. Many books have been written on this topic, performances have been staged, many films have been produced, interesting and truthful, gray and far-fetched. It probably takes a significant amount of time for such works as "War and Peace" by L. Tolstoy to appear, which would show the real picture of everything that happened then.

Today, materials about the war reflect the subjective impressions of people who participated in the events of those years, or who studied them under the influence of the official point of view and prevailing public opinion. Each author describes events taking into account his emotions.

This can be clearly seen from memoirs, especially of military leaders. If you listen to ours, you can see how they describe briefly and indistinctly the sad and tragic days of 1941-1942, but cheerfully and meticulously the victories of 1943-1945, from which their role is visible - small in the defeats in the 1st half of the war (mainly due to the fault of Stalin), and a very important role in the victories in the 2nd half of the war.

German generals in their memoirs speak in the same spirit, only in reverse: about the 1st half of the war they talk about their victories in detail, but about the 2nd half they speak sparingly and vaguely, while placing all the blame on Hitler.

The American military and the huge army of experts on "war from afar", as a rule, have little interest in the initial stage of the war and mainly describe their invaluable assistance to the allies, without which they would inevitably die. And they tell in great detail how they defeated the Germans after landing in Europe, paying secondary attention to their British allies. The Americans covered the war with Japan much more objectively.

Among all the memoir literature, Winston Churchill's "History of the 2nd World War" leaves a strong impression, written generally objectively, although, naturally, it reflects the opinion of the English side. The work was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature.

There is practically no soldier's memoir literature, and for good reason. The soldiers were those small cogs of the war (as Stalin put it), who are also called cannon fodder, carrying out the will of the higher leadership and had little opportunity to assess the situation at the front on a large scale. They saw a narrow strip of their area of action, and superhuman physical stress and suffering sometimes led to the fact that a person found himself on the brink where normal human feelings and concepts disappear - where is there any assessment of events! Therefore, one cannot expect complete, realistic soldier's memoirs.

And at the same time, from the kaleidoscope of those days, various episodes remain in the memory as they seemed *then*, and not after the war, when you rethink a lot and perceive differently. As F. Roosevelt said, "history cannot be rewritten anew, presenting what is desired as reality." Hence the title of this work - "Small episodes" - from an eyewitness to the events of those years...

"Surprise attack"

The May holidays of 1941 took place in Dnepropetrovsk. For ninth-graders, everything seemed cloudless, their whole life lay ahead. Despite great financial difficulties and even the fact that you are left without parents, everything seems simple and clear. Life has now become better and more fun, especially after the defeat of internal enemies and after they wiped the noses of the Anglo-French imperialists by concluding non-aggression pacts with Germany and Japan. As a result, we have peace, they beat each other, and the USSR supplies Germany with various raw materials to help Germany by the trainload... Although, it was strange to read in the newspapers how well the Germans beat Western countries - after all, quite recently, Germany was called a fascist aggressor...

I remember at school we learned a poem in German class:

Moegen drohen die Faschisten ,
Bald vorbei ist ihre Zeit .
Alle jungle Communisten
immer sind zum Kaempfbereit ...

One festive day in May we were sitting at a classmate's house and arguing about something. In the same room, in another corner, not very loudly, but clearly, my friend's father was talking with his brother, the director of a large metallurgical plant at that time, who had come to see him. We didn't listen to what they were talking about, however, when our argument stopped, we heard the guest's voice: "Give it up, nothing will happen. The question is completely clear, the Germans have prepared and will attack us, I just don't know when this will happen."

My friend and I looked at each other, without giving any sign that we had overheard. When a month and a half later, in mid-June 1941, a TASS report appeared in the newspapers that rumors about an allegedly impending German attack on the USSR were provocative, I involuntarily recalled an overheard conversation, which was immediately happily forgotten. At the same time, according to stories, posters appeared in Western Ukraine: "Everything is calm on the Soviet-Polish border. Shoot for panic ! »

On the evening of Saturday, June 21, we had a party at school to celebrate the end of the school year, in which the main characters were the guys who had graduated from 10th grade. Late at night we went home. And on the morning of Sunday, June 22, I was awakened by noise in the yard - everyone was loudly discussing something, constantly repeating the word "war." The radio broadcast a statement from the People's Commissar for Foreign Affairs, Molotov, about the "treacherous surprise attack of Nazi Germany." This "suddenness" began to be considered one of the main reasons for the huge defeats and losses of the Red Army in the first period of the war. Again I remembered the overheard conversation with my comrade, and an obsessive question arose: why did no one "above" know anything, and why were we so poorly prepared?... Who could imagine then millions of Russian prisoners of war?...

The first days of the war

For the teenagers in our yard, everything has changed. Somehow, numerous fights and hooligan pranks, well known to the residents of our Mostovaya Street in Dnepropetrovsk, stopped on their own. The guys often got together and participated in the construction of "cracks" designed to shelter the residents of the yard from enemy aircraft. In the evenings they complained to each other: it's bad that we are still small and will not be able to participate in battles on the front, which is so far from here. They envied those soldiers who would defeat the Nazis in Germany. No one thought about the retreat of the Red Army. The formation of such views among young people before the war was influenced by a whole series of interesting films that we watched greedily: "If

Tomorrow is War," "Chapaev," "Shchors" and others. Everyone believed in the wisdom of Stalin.

Very quickly the war reached us - German air raids began at night, and during an air raid everyone ran to take cover in the "cracks." There, in the shelter, discussions continued among the guys in the same spirit about how great it would be to fight at the front. At the same time, the adults shushed us and became increasingly gloomy, talking to each other only in a whisper.

Soon events in the city began to unfold faster and faster. German raids became frequent, bombs flew over our heads towards the nearby station and the bridge over the Dnieper. Huge lines of cars, carts, and cattle clogged the streets leading to the station and the bridge. The word "evacuation" was in the air. Most of the guys in our yard did not know what to do; there were people here who did not work at large enterprises, which the authorities began to evacuate to the distant rear.

My friends and I ran to our school, it was closed. They rushed to the district Komsomol committee; there were some people running around with bundles of papers, which they were throwing into a truck, arguing with the frightened driver, who was trying to drive away faster.

No one responded to our question about what we should do. Some guy shouted as he walked: "There's no time for you here!" Another man shouted at us to quickly take the piles of paper out to the truck. We got down to business and soon everyone was covered in soap, as it was very hot. After another shout from the driver, several people who participated in this operation jumped into the back, the truck roared and disappeared from our eyes in a cloud of dust. We looked after the truck for a long time, then, in a depressed state, we went home.

The next day, German troops entered Dnepropetrovsk. The boys grew up quickly from all these events: the war took away our childhood...

An occupation

The time of occupation passed like a continuous black spot in life. Those were terrible days. With the exception of the traitors who went into the service of the fascists and who were a clear minority, for all residents of the city the question was how to survive. The Germans behaved towards the population like an evil owner towards cattle. First, they destroyed all the Jews, of whom there were many left in Dnepropetrovsk, and then they began to kill the rest. If one German is shot somewhere, the entire area is raided, and a hundred adults, children, old people who come to hand are shot on the spot. Therefore, you must always be on guard and hide. Moreover, the Germans deported young people to Germany for hard labor.

In order not to die of hunger, all our modest things were traded for any food. So we lost a particularly valuable thing - a Singer sewing machine, which my grandmother took from Ostrog during the evacuation to the East in 1915.

The only consolation at that terrible time was the radio I hid in the coal warehouse, which I then hid in the kitchen. From time to time I turned it on and listened to reports from Moscow and the BBC from London. He passed on the information to his friends under the guise that he had heard it from someone. That's what they said back then: I heard from the OBS agency, "one woman said it."

One day my grandmother tried to sell old Soviet newspapers on the market, which could be freely taken from the destroyed library of our school, which was open and not functioning. As soon as she came out with a stack of newspapers, the police grabbed her and took her to the Gestapo. They put her face to the wall and ordered her to answer

who gave her the task of distributing these newspapers. Grandmother could not understand anything until some policeman began to shove newspapers dedicated to the anniversary of the defeat of the White Guards near Tsaritsyn in 1918 in her face. It turned out that the Germans had just been defeated at Stalingrad in the winter of 1943, and the police decided that the newspapers were being distributed as propaganda. Finally, realizing that the old woman had nothing to do with it, they cursed her and pushed her out into the street. Grandmother could not come to her senses for a long time; she said that she was afraid of one thing: if something bad had happened to her, I would never have known anything.

Hatred of the Germans grew very quickly, and the vast majority of the population joyfully awaited liberation. When our troops approached, everyone tried to take up arms and beat the Germans. The onslaught of the Red Army shortened the time of the fascist occupation of the city.



The beginning of a soldier's journey

There is commotion at the military registration and enlistment office, which opened immediately after our troops entered the city. The names of conscripts were shouted from everywhere, the recruits ran to the registration rooms, and then formed into small groups and quickly disappeared. It was my turn. In a large room, several military men asked three or four recruits questions, and the doctors quickly examined them and shouted "fit!" I was handed a piece of paper with the group number and the inscription "Fit for non-combatant service." Why, no one said anything, and there was no time to talk.

Immediately some sergeant led our group, mostly eighteen-year-old boys, with whom we quickly walked out of the city in the direction of the North-West.

with me from home a small duffel bag, in which, except for a woollen blanket and a piece of bread, there was nothing. Along the way, other groups joined us, and after a day of continuous marching, a large team of at least a hundred people was formed. Out of habit, after such transitions, the guys, who had been malnourished for a long time and looked like ghosts, all fell from fatigue.

When passing through villages, the recruits exchanged their belongings with the peasants for any food: some gave a watch, some a scarf, and I a blanket. As a result, I became the owner of a piece of lard, and this seriously strengthened my strength (although soon, during an overnight stay, someone stole the rest of the lard).

Late at night we finally reached the location of some unit, located in the village after leaving the battle and greatly thinned out. It was the end of summer, the earth was still warm, so everyone fell asleep where they stood after the command “clears up.” The morning was spent getting uniforms and registration. At the same time, they gave out what was available. If someone’s uniform didn’t fit, they wore parts of their civilian clothes. It looked like a partisan. Among the older recruits there were bores who did not allow the foreman to pass, begging for the missing uniforms. One day, unable to bear it, the foreman roared: “Leave me alone, you’ll only go through a couple of days, and then on the front line you’ll find what you need...”

Then the main questions for us were when to sleep and what to eat. Everything else has gone from my mind... In war, a person turns into something far from Homo Sapiens ...

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When filling out the documents, the lieutenant, having learned that I had graduated from 9th grade, said: “Very literate! Get a Maxim machine gun. Four more were included in the machine-gun crew with me. The second half of the day was devoted to studying the machine gun, along with the instruction song:

“I was born a machine gunner, I grew up in the Maxim *team* ,
I was born a machine gunner, I grew up in the Maxim *team*

Chorus : “Oh, these box, casing, frame, connecting rod, and with bloodworms,
Shock spring, receiver with slide...”

At the end of the day we made one or two bursts at targets. The lieutenant said: “That’s enough, finish your studies at the front, I’m sorry for the cartridges.”

The next day there was an oath taking and a parade of the rifle regiment in which we would henceforth have to fight. During the parade, when the authorities walked around the lined up ranks of fighters, I began to lose consciousness and sag down. The guys standing next to me supported me, and I hung in their arms. The authorities did not notice this, I felt better, the regimental orchestra was playing. Our commander praised me for not collapsing on the ground while making my rounds to the high authorities, and said that it was due to malnutrition and would go away.

The front was nearby, the Dnieper was next to us. For some time there was a calm in this area, and yet during the day it was difficult for the troops to move to the front: German planes in the clear blue sky constantly hung overhead, bombings alternated with machine-gun attacks from fighters. Therefore, our troops moved mainly at night in complete darkness. You can’t see where to step, and if you slip, you fall along with the machine gun, which the soldiers carried on themselves in parts: a 32 kg machine gun, a 16 kg barrel, an 8 kg shield. Plus a carabiner, a shovel, and a duffel bag.

When approaching the front line, you always need to dig a trench for yourself with a shovel. It seemed that there was no strength left, but during shelling you dig quickly, since this is the only means of salvation. I would never have thought that a person could endure such overloads! Several forced marches at night and during the day, and our regiment came close to the front line. The earth was buzzing, there were explosions all around that made you fall to the ground along with the Maxim. And when you rise, you miss many of the soldiers who just walked next to you. The dead are lying around in different poses. The condition is such that the body ceases to sense danger...

We hear the command "Forward", put the machine gun on wheels and together we pull it along the ground into the field. Weeds wrap around the wheels, lumps of earth stick, making pulling the machine gun unbearable. You have to constantly change with your comrades while they are intact. Infantrymen are running around, overtaking us, with some kind of roar...

Finally, we reach the front line, where we must change the regiment, from which there is almost no one left and which is moving to the rear. All that was left of the regiment on the front line were freshly dug trenches and dead soldiers. There are no longer two in our calculation. We feverishly dig in. Where is the enemy?.. Finally, you begin to understand by the tracer bullets that are flying towards you... After the first bursts from the Maxim, you feel that the mine explosions and barrage of bullets are intensifying around you: apparently, the Germans have spotted us and are trying to suppress our point.

Suddenly I notice a new trench that has just been dug nearby and I climb into it, rejoicing at the shelter from the fire that has turned up.

And then a soldier's head appears from somewhere, with a heart-rending cry: "Hey, what did I do for you...dig a trench?!" I had to free the trench, where the soldier immediately dived, and I crawled ten meters away from him towards my guys. And then, with a terrible howl, a German shell rushed by, which hit right into the ill-fated trench... Pieces of a soldier from that trench flew towards me... Since then, I have become a fatalist...



"Eh, infantry, don't dust! "

Our attacks continued continuously, with the Germans trying from time to time to knock us out of our captured positions. There is a massive death of soldiers all around. Everything is like in a terrible kaleidoscope, without having time to be imprinted in your memory, and you no longer remember the faces of the continuously arriving reinforcements of the militia...

Often, after the next liberation of a village, surviving men in civilian clothes join us, they are given rifles in their hands, and they participate in the next attacks in this "outfit."

And when they had to retreat and the Germans captured such “fighters”, they brutally destroyed them, like partisans. Once, having recaptured a village where the Germans had captured a detachment of such fighters in semi-civilian clothing, we saw a terrible picture: they were all bayoneted. After such a spectacle, everyone understands that it is impossible to be captured, and, secondly, the Germans must be destroyed without any pity.

When the front line moves further, residents of surrounding villages search the fields for acquaintances of the wounded and dead. Once, during an attack with local residents in civilian clothes, we heard a cry of “Help!” from a fighter lying on his back. When they ran up to him, he was not wounded, but was unable to get up due to an acute attack of radiculitis. When he was picked up, he ran forward again. Another such freshly mobilized soldier ended up in our company during a two-day respite, when we were taken to the 2nd echelon for replenishment, because practically no one was left alive in the company. The recruit kept moaning and coughing heavily. The company commander ordered me to take him to the medical battalion to see a doctor. We were received by an obese female doctor of unpleasant appearance. Reluctantly she offered the soldier to take off his shirt, listened a little to his chest and shouted: “Healthy as a bull! You all want to avoid the front lines!” We returned to the company, I reported to the commander, and the soldier kept coughing.

In the morning they found the soldier dead - it turned out that he had acute tuberculosis... So the military doctor fulfilled her medical duty...

As mentioned, troop movements were mostly carried out at night to avoid German air raids. Less often during the day, but in such cases it was necessary to make the throws quickly and, as far as possible, away from main roads.

When, while moving, they hit the road, everyone was covered from head to toe with dust. From time to time, trucks with guns rushed along the road at speed. When the trucks showered us with clouds of dust, the soldiers in the backs shouted after us: “Eh, infantry, don’t dust!” And the infantry shook their fists at the passing trucks.

Occasionally, reinforcements arrived from the Central Asian republics. It was a harsh time both for them and for those units into which they joined. Many knew Russian poorly and were not prepared for the drastic change in life. Once on the front line, they fell into a state of shock and ended tragically. An animalistic fear was instilled in them, which turned their actions into unpredictable ones. Often in panic, they fled through minefields and blew themselves up, despite warnings, they tried to shoot crossbows in their arms and legs in order to end up in the hospital wounded, there were even cases of surrendering to the enemy just to escape this hell.

Only after a certain time, being on the front line, do you begin to gradually understand how to behave and try to protect yourself, albeit to some extent, from the death that surrounds you. However, this was only possible for those who did not panic under extreme circumstances. Many people died in the war from shock and panic, due to a lack of common sense and ingenuity.

One day, with a lightning-fast morning rush, our company attacked a German trench. The Nazis were confused, the survivors jumped out of the trench, throwing away their weapons, and ran back to their previous positions. Our fighters got so excited that they almost caught up with the Germans and ran alongside. No one had the strength to shoot anymore. The soldiers uttered heartbreaking screams and ran down the hill, where a forest plantation was visible. And suddenly we noticed German “Tigers” crawling out of there and starting to hit the entire group of runners with direct fire, not distinguishing who was whose...

Despite heavy losses during the attack, the Germans ran further to their own, and we lay down in the field. I jumped into a large shell hole where 2-3 soldiers were already lying. They realized that they had to run away so as not to be captured. The first soldier who jumped out of the crater was hit by a bullet, and the same fate befell the second. Then I took the dead man's rifle that was lying nearby, put his hat on top of it and put it to the side above the crater, and I jumped out from the other side of the crater while they were aiming at the hat. He ran in dashes, weaving and falling until he reached some kind of shelter. Finally, I reached the remnants of the company with a living commander. He tried to scold me for leaving weapons on the battlefield. But seeing that our company was practically gone, he fell silent...

During the battles near Kirovograd, we attacked the Germans from the trench they occupied on an unnamed high-rise. The attack was sudden and the Germans threw a lot of small arms. German and our dead and wounded soldiers lay all around. Very opportunely, two orderlies came running to us with stretchers to carry away the wounded, but did not have time to do anything. The Germans launched a counterattack. When we prepared our Maxim for battle, it turned out that it did not work due to a large layer of dirt that got inside. While the others were fighting off the attacking Germans, I urgently cleaned and oiled the machine gun. Then everything was captured as if in slow motion: the fascists running and screaming, shooting at us point-blank... When I finished cleaning the machine gun, the distorted faces of the fascists were already visible, approaching us, eager for reprisals...

From the first burst the machine gun worked perfectly - the attack was repulsed.

Then we noticed that something was moving in our trench: it turned out that during the battle, the frightened orderlies fell to the bottom of the trench and covered themselves with a stretcher, which was slightly covered with earth. We had to bring them to their senses, after which they took one wounded man with them and disappeared.

Then the German counterattack began again, which was repulsed with heavy losses. In general, as in the famous song, "there were only three of us left out of eighteen guys"...

Alas, we were almost out of ammunition and there was no help. And then I noticed the MG -42 light machine gun abandoned by the Germans and a lot of machine gun belts lying around for it. I began to find out how this machine gun worked when the Germans launched a counterattack for the third time. From our side, only isolated shots were heard. There was an obvious ending... Time seemed to stand still while I mastered the captured weapon... And just in time I mastered it, the captured machine gun turned out to be better than our "Maxim" - the attack was repulsed...

Soon help arrived, and the Germans were finally knocked out from the heights.

And after the fight, I myself felt something was wrong: there was a feeling as if I was standing on my head and painfully wanted to return to a normal position. It turned out to be a shell shock.

I lay there all day and suffered until I gradually got better and the concussion wore off.

Once, in one of the attacks, we recaptured a village from the Germans, which they did not have time to destroy. Jumping into one hut, we saw a dying stove, and on it a large cauldron with cooked food. Everything was eaten instantly. Since we had to spend the night in the village, everyone immediately ended up in different places and fell asleep. The warm hut seemed like paradise to the frozen militia.

To warm up better, I lay down on the stove-bed and instantly passed out. Suddenly, through his sleep, he felt pain and, screaming, jumped out of the stove into his burning overcoat and fell to the floor where the rest of the soldiers were lying. Everyone immediately jumped up and leaned on me, knocking out the flames on my back. There were no burns, but instead of the overcoat there were only burnt shreds, and it was already late, cold autumn outside. In the morning I begged the foreman to give me

another overcoat, and he responded: "Well, where can I get it for you, if someone is killed or wounded, then everything will be all right with you." I had to get it myself...

Somehow, after 3 days and nights of continuous fighting, without food or sleep, we received the order to dig in. My stomach was simply in pain, and there was no kitchen or food. What to do? Late in the evening, 8 people from our company gathered, someone proposed a surprise attack at night on a German bunker located close to us, from which a machine gun fired from time to time. We thought that there was probably something to eat there. We agreed, divided into 4 people on both sides and crawled in complete darkness, without warning any of our friends.

As it turned out, we easily reached the bunker from the rear and jumped into it. The Germans were all asleep, except for the man on duty, who was firing a machine gun. Five were shot on the spot. We fumbled around in all corners in the darkness and found a backpack, which we dragged back with us. We returned to our trenches, turned out our backpack, and there was only a loaf of black bread and some rags.

At dawn, everyone looked with greed. as one of us carefully divided the loaf among 8 people. The bread was swallowed right away. By the way, no one from our unit noticed our absence, since everyone was asleep.

There were other reasons for unauthorized actions by soldiers. So, one day in our area after long battles there was a lull. Not far from us we could see a trench in which the Germans were, and behind it, on a hillock, a small village of huts under thatched roofs. And then, one day at dawn, when the silhouettes of huts began to appear from the darkness, we saw the Germans running from hut to hut with some long poles with which they set fire to thatched roofs. Huge fires immediately flared up above the houses.

At first we looked, spellbound, at what was happening, and then, as one, without any command, we jumped out of our trench and shouted "Hurray!" rushed towards the Germans. They did not expect such a turn and rushed to run away from the village. Apparently, they were preparing to retreat in this area, leaving a small cover, which set the village on fire. To our surprise, when we ran up to the burning houses, several fascist arsonists were already in the hands of the village residents, who miraculously survived thanks to the basements.

While we were pursuing the remnants of the Germans outside the village, and then returned back to find our commanders, without whose permission we rushed into the attack, we saw German arsonists hanging from the trees near the burning huts, captured by the peasants. The angry residents who lost their homes were understandable. The residents hugged each of us and cried. It's a difficult picture. And how much more had to be endured...

After many days of stubborn fighting, our unit broke into Kirovograd. For the first time we felt solid ground under our feet. It was night. We moved along some wide asphalt street. The drone of German planes was continuously heard in the sky, and no one attached any importance to it. Suddenly the surroundings became light. From somewhere behind the nearby houses, flares fired by fascist saboteurs soared into the sky, and bombs flew towards us along the street. The explosion nailed me to some fence. Raising his head, he saw a row of burning houses and a huge number of soldiers lying around, who a few minutes before had felt the joy of victory after taking the city. And along the downhill street flowed a real river of human blood...

Only after some time did I notice that there was a lot of blood coming from the finger of my right hand: I was caught by a small fragment of a bomb, which I took out myself, and covered the wound with a bandage. Wounds in such conditions healed quickly, "like on a dog."

One night, during a lull, the regiment commander and his entourage appeared in our trench. Having found out the situation, he asked the company commander: "Who distinguished himself in battle?" In response: "Mr. K. has been on the front line for 3 months now - and is not killed or wounded." The regiment commander shouted to his assistant: "Reward!", and soon his entire group disappeared.

And so days after days, alternating heavy, exhausting battles and rare days spent in the 2nd echelon of the front line while replenishing the "manpower" that is constantly disappearing in the meat grinder of war...

Korsun-Shevchenko boiler

At the end of 1943, winter gradually made itself felt. During a slight lull on the front line, which passed along the outskirts of the village, from which only the walls of houses and the skeletons of stoves remained, we took turns leaving our trenches and crawling into one of the rural houses, where they arranged a camp bath for us. It was slightly frosty. Tarpaulin awnings were hastily thrown over the broken windows of the house and instead of a roof, and water was heated in a boiler there, with which they washed themselves in the fresh air. But after the bath, great joy awaited us - we were given warm underwear and cotton sweatshirts and trousers, as well as hats. They immediately forgot about the troubles of setting up a bathhouse in the cold...

A day later we left the front line and were transferred to the 2nd Ukrainian Front in the Korsun-Shevchenkivskyi region. There the encirclement of a large fascist group was completed. Frosts alternated with thaws, and everywhere the earth turned into pure mud. Even the tanks got stuck in a number of places and could not move, but we, the infantry, seemed to merge with the mud and kept attacking and attacking. Finally, at the end of 1943 and beginning of 1944 (in the battles no one even noticed that the New Year had arrived) our regiment reached a small river, probably Ros', which ran in a ravine. The opposite bank was high, on it the Germans dug in in a trench, behind which the village could be seen.

Our attack floundered, and only a handful of soldiers remained from the regiment, which was ordered to gain a foothold on the river bank opposite the German positions. A rare calm settled in this area of the huge Korsun-Shevchenko cauldron. The Germans directed all the force of the blow to the Western side of the boiler to unblock it and connect it with their own.

Within a few days, real winter set in, everything was covered with snow, and the river between us and the Germans was frozen. It was terribly cold in the trenches, we tried to make small fires in them, for which we had to crawl to the nearest remains of huts for flammable material. Today it's hard to imagine how we spent the winter in the trenches...

On one of those days, an unusual reinforcement for that time arrived to us - real professional troops from the Far East, who were sent to the Western Front when the danger of a Japanese attack had disappeared. In fact, we, the remnants of our regiment, joined the new reinforcements, and not they joined us. However, despite the fact that these soldiers were healthy, strong, guys who differed from us in their appearance and uniform, it immediately became clear that these were completely "green" newcomers who had not yet seen the horrors of war. One of these healthy guys who ended up in our company was so shocked that he was shaking all the time and was "out of his mind." In a situation where alarmists appear, the rest cannot stand it for long and they are also attacked by fear.

Notorious alarmists were sometimes shot on the spot... At the same time, they could also be shot for a rolled-up cigarette made from a newspaper with the image of Stalin...

In mid-January 1944 we were informed that the next morning a front breakthrough was planned in our sector. A time was set for artillery preparation at dawn, after which we, the infantry, were to attack the German positions. For speed and surprise, it was assumed that the sappers would cut the passages in the wire fence that the Germans had placed on the other side in front of their trenches. In order to attack quickly, we must be light in order to quickly cross the neutral zone. Before this evening we handed over our duffel bags to the commander.

I couldn't sleep at night. Suddenly muffled voices were heard: our scouts and sappers crawled forward, who were supposed to find out the situation on the opposite bank and make passages there for the infantry. They asked us to be careful and not shoot at them when they came back. They agreed on a password, and they crawled through the snow into the darkness. It seemed like time dragged on for a very long time, and the scouts still did not return. Suddenly there was a whisper, someone said the password, and several scouts appeared. In great excitement, they said that they had easily reached the German trench, killed the fascists dozing in it, and entrenched themselves there. Obviously. Most of the Germans went to spend the night in a village located behind their trenches. The scouts suggested that we all go into the German trench, and in the morning, when the Germans return from the village to the trench, meet them as expected. Everyone agreed, including the platoon commander, the only officer who was with us soldiers at that time.

The scouts went with us, with the exception of one soldier, whom the platoon commander asked to urgently convey a message to the command about what had happened, so that our artillery would not hit our now trench across the river. The commander shouted after him that he would use a rocket to show ours where the Germans were.

We quickly crossed the river on the ice in the dark, climbed to the other bank and soon found ourselves in a former German trench, where several of our soldiers were already sitting. I managed to notice that the trench was very deep, convenient for defense. At that time it began to get light, and we, looking out of the German trench, saw with horror how tanks and guns with artillery barrages pointed at us appeared on our shore on the other side... The platoon commander fired several rockets towards the village, from where the attacking fascists ran towards us fully armed. Despite the rocket launcher's instructions, a barrage of fire fell on us, not distinguishing where the Germans were and where our own were... Everything hummed and roared around, as if before the End of the World...

Our trench was almost completely covered with earth, along with many soldiers hiding there. A huge red-hot fragment from a shell hissed near me, and it burned my hand when I accidentally touched it.

Suddenly, after the artillery barrage, there was silence. As soon as I began to get out from under the rubble and looked out of the trench, I saw how, with shouts of "Hurray!" Our own soldiers were rushing towards us... Having reached our trench, they saw that no one was shooting. I shouted: "Guys, ours are here, and the Germans are in the village!" They pulled me out of the trench by the arms, several more surviving soldiers crawled out of the ground, and we joined the attackers.

So almost our entire company died forever in the trench as a result of our own artillery fire - apparently, the scout did not have time to inform his troops about our night actions, which did not fit into the attack plan...

Having knocked out the Nazis from the village, we chased them across a huge flat field. Suddenly a column of fire shot up near me, and a deafening explosion threw me to the ground. I immediately jumped up to run forward, but I didn't feel any support in my legs and fell to the ground again. Only now did I feel a sharp pain in my leg and noticed how the blood from my leg quickly soaked my cotton trousers. The chain of attacking

soldiers went forward, moving further and further away from me, there was no one nearby, shells were exploding all over the field, tracer bullets were flying around. I realized that I had to quickly leave the battlefield and go to the rear of my own people.

The wounded leg could not stand, the blood flowed incessantly. Then I used the rifle with the barrel down like a crutch, resting the butt against my armpit. This way it was possible to move around somehow. Jumping, falling and getting up, I hobbled to some road, where several of our wounded had already gathered. The cotton trousers were all covered in blood. I felt that if I fall, I won't get up.

Suddenly a truck with ammunition rushed along the road, then another. Nobody paid attention to our screams. Seeing another truck approaching, I shouted to the wounded to lie across the road. Everyone rushed to the ground - the road was blocked. We heard a lot of obscene words, but the wounded were still reluctantly taken into the truck...

I woke up already on a stretcher, which two orderlies were carrying into a large tarpaulin tent with a red cross on top. At that moment, bombs whistled and explosions were heard somewhere nearby. The orderlies threw the stretcher to the ground along with me, and I lost consciousness again...

I woke up again on the operating table, when the doctor was cutting my leg with terrible pain. He started to scream when he saw a soldier nearby on another operating table, shouting in delirium, "Leave my hand!" , and his arm hanging on pieces of skin, and his entire shoulder was torn apart and presented a huge wound. The orderly placed a bucket under the wounded man's dangling arm, and the doctor cut it off with a wave of his knife. The hand fell into the bucket, and the soldier's cry was heard again: "Leave my hand!" I could no longer scream from such a sight, although the pain was terrible. I remember the doctor showed me the bullet he had taken out of my leg.

After the operation, I was put in one of the camp tents of the medical battalion. I developed a very high fever and was delirious for several days. Gradually things became clearer. These days I was happy to listen to a concert by artists from the front-line brigade in the ward.

I don't remember how they sent me from the medical battalion to the Kharkov hospital. I woke up on the train, my body was very weak, and I practically couldn't move. At the station in Kharkov we were unloaded into an ambulance van: 2 wounded on top, 2 on bottom, including me. The trip to the hospitals was agony because of the bad road and because the blood of the wounded man lying on top was dripping onto my face...

The hospital was located in the center of Kharkov on Sumskaya Street, not far from the central square, where the first high-rise building of Gosprom stood in the Union , of which only the walls remained after the fire. The hospital was located in the building of Kharkov University.

Recovery was difficult . In addition to being wounded, he fell ill with dysentery. It's surprising that I didn't catch a cold after we were washed with completely cold water upon arrival at the hospital, despite our deplorable condition.

Because of dysentery, I could not take any food, the doctors did not know what to do. Salvation came unexpectedly. Upon admission to the hospital, I wrote a letter to my grandmother in Dnepropetrovsk, in which I explained that I was in a hospital in Kharkov. She was able, by some miracle, to get to Kharkov by passing transport and find my hospital. Seeing my condition, my grandmother ran somewhere and brought me garlic, which I tried, unlike any other food. After that, he gradually began to eat and get better, and the wounds healed faster. So my grandmother saved me once again.

From time to time, wounded Central Asians arrived at the hospital, constantly crying and moaning. For the other wounded it was unpleasant; everyone scolded them. From time to time, some of them were taken to the tribunal due to the fact that they wounded themselves by shooting themselves, which amounted to desertion.

Over time, I slowly began to move with the help of crutches.

At this time, the operetta theater returned to Kharkov, which from the first days took patronage over our hospital, since we were nearby. So several times I managed to visit the theater in the gallery right in my dressing gown, covering myself with crutches for decency, and watch "Silva", "Maritsa" and other operettas. During the day, sometimes it was possible to leave the hospital to the nearby zoo. After the city passed twice to the Germans and back to our troops, only a donkey, a bear, a monkey and a large parrot remained in the zoo, which had completely lost its feathers, which is why it became terribly ugly.

One day, me and several other wounded who went out into the city and did not return before the appointed time, while trying to climb over the hospital fence with the help of crutches, were spotted by sentries. For violation of discipline, we received three days in the guardhouse. It was very unpleasant because of the humiliating procedure of removing the shoulder straps and belt and sending me to a special guarded basement room.

The other soldiers in the guardhouse greeted us vigorously, inviting us to play cards. And as food there they only gave bread and water as punishment. This made me feel disgusted.

Less than half a day had passed when an officer entered the guardhouse and asked us who knew German. Everyone started making noise: "You got into the wrong camp, go to the prisoners of war!" The officer began to shout; "I ask you seriously!" Everyone made excuses. Then he clarified: "Perhaps someone studied German and will help us in one matter?" Then I came out and said that I studied the language at school. I was immediately ordered to leave the guardhouse, put into a car parked on the street and taken away in an unknown direction. Soon we arrived in the courtyard of a building, went inside, walked through several rooms and found ourselves in a dimly lit room. There was a large table with a table lamp on it, the light from which fell on the topographic maps lying on it. Immediately I heard: "Here is the translator," and those accompanying me disappeared.

The eyes began to discern, on one side of the table, a major standing, and on the other side, a captured German pilot sitting on a chair. The major pointed me to a chair on the side and shouted: "Translate quickly!"

While I was sitting down with crutches, the major demanded that the German indicate on the map which airfield he had taken off from. Out of fright, all the German words I knew flew out of my head, except for "was" (that)...

The major was already yelling at me: "Translate quickly, otherwise you won't need crutches anymore!" "Under such conditions of "brainstorming," it seemed to me that it exploded - words and entire phrases that I had learned began to appear in my head, since at our school the German language was taught by an old German woman who almost did not speak Russian to us.

With grief in half, the conversation began in a primitive form, and the German began to answer questions. Then the major left for a meeting, I remained in the room with the German and the escort soldier. They sat in silence for a long time. The major appeared and said: "Translate - You, stinking fascist, lied and showed the wrong points on the map. If you don't tell the truth, I'll only give you herring to eat, and you won't get any water until you speak! "It was a little hard for me to translate such a phrase, and I thought for a long time. Then the major yelled at me: "And you, too, will get such a diet if you delay!" Somehow we received new answers from the German, and the major again left the room to recheck. This time the major, returning, ordered the guard to take the German away, and told me that now everything was in order, and I could go to the hospital for my good work.

The guardhouse was finished. The wounds healed quickly, and he could already walk, limping, without crutches. At the hospital they issued a certificate of injury, which he hid in his pocket without reading. Only 30 years later I accidentally read in a certificate that he was wounded in the left leg by a shell fragment, although in fact the wound was from a bullet in the right leg. Bureaucracy has always worked the same way.

A large group of recovering soldiers from the hospital was sent to a reserve regiment stationed on the outskirts of Kharkov on the so-called Kholodnaya Gora. Once a detachment of the reserve regiment passed by a forest on the outskirts of the city, and I, limping, brought up the rear of the detachment. Suddenly, a group of terribly ragged gypsies jumped out of the forest, it is unclear how they survived during the fascist occupation. One gypsy woman ran up to me and handed me a large apple - it was the biggest gift for that time.



Front again

May 1944. Our reserve regiment was loaded onto a freight train, which transported us to Western Ukraine. We marched to the West following our advancing troops. One day we entered a small town through which the transmission line had just passed, and stopped near the surviving railway station building for a short rest. The town seemed deserted, not a soul on the streets. In the distance I could see a wide street, along which I decided to walk and explore the town. None of the soldiers wanted to come with me. I didn't take any weapons with me. Having walked a little forward and not letting anyone out of sight, I heard church singing from somewhere. It was unexpected in a deserted town. There was a church in the alley on the left, and singing could be heard from inside. Her door was closed. As soon as I turned from the main street towards the church and began to listen, I felt that someone was standing behind me. I turned and saw a large man in a civilian cloak with a ferocious face and a hand thrust into the pocket of the cloak, from where the outline of a pistol protruded...

Then I realized that, having turned to the side from the road, I was out of sight of our soldiers. A conversation took place: "What are we watching, do you like it?" "Why, I answered, they sing great." "Aren't you a Jew?" I realized that salvation from this obvious Banderite lies in delaying time and calmness. "What, you can't see that by the nose?" I answered him. He continued: "But there are all kinds..." and stands in front of me with a pistol pointed straight at my stomach, not giving me the opportunity to escape... "Did you come here to create collective farms?" I answer him: "I am a simple soldier and have nothing to do with this. If you decide for yourself, you will create it yourself"... "And I'm telling you," he shouted, that we won't have collective farms here!"...

The singing in the church continued. "If you want, they will, but if you don't want, they won't," I was stalling for time... At that moment the singing ended, the entrance doors of the church opened with a noise, and about two dozen parishioners appeared on the threshold near us. The Bandera man turned to them, and in one leap I was already on the main street, waving my arms to attract the attention of my comrades. With one eye I saw that the Bandera man had disappeared. After such an incident, I realized how it could all end, and I no longer looked away from my people.

Upon the arrival of the unit at the designated point, we joined the troops of the 1st Ukrainian Front. When we were all lined up, the commander of our new regiment appeared. Having greeted us, he shouted: "Non-smokers, two steps forward!" Everyone laughed, thinking he was joking, but he again repeated the command seriously. Hesitantly, to the general roar of the others, I and several other people came out. We were taken aside. It turned out that it was the colonel's idea to have a regimental battery of 76-mm guns, served by non-smokers, from the battery commander to the riders. The battery was horse-drawn.

On the move, we crossed the Vistula River, where I almost drowned due to my inability to swim, but it turned out okay - I held on tightly to the raft. Much worse was crossing the Dnieper under heavy German fire...

We soon found ourselves at the Sandomierz bridgehead near the town of Sandomierz in Poland. I was assigned as a gunner for a gun that I saw for the first time, and I had to learn it right on the battlefield with the help of knowledgeable soldiers, as well as instructions.

The nature of the battles has now changed for me: I no longer went on the attack shouting "Hurray!", however, it did not become easier, since I had to move the gun into position together with the infantry, rolling it with my hands, and fire direct fire, while being a good a target for the Germans. The last of our strength was spent digging shelters for guns and ammunition and trenches for ourselves. At this time, the Nazis threw a large number of SS troops and Vlasov troops into battle with the goal of throwing us into the Vistula.

During one of the throws from position to position, our crew with a gun jumped out onto some hillock. Looking down, we saw a calmly marching column of German vehicles moving in a parallel path with us. Everyone was taken aback when they saw each other at a fairly close distance. Quickly turning around, we unhooked the gun, and I was the first to open fire on the convoy. After several direct hits on the vehicles, the Germans scattered. But then, having come to their senses, we launched an attack on our lonely standing gun...

And then, as in a movie, the sleds flew up to us, in front of the Germans they picked up a gun and galloped out of the dangerous collision zone with us... For this battle I received a medal "For Courage".



Here in Poland, for the first time, we saw that our aviation had finally gained air supremacy.

From the very beginning of the war, German aviation hung over the head of the Red Army in the literal sense of the word and had a huge influence on the defeat of our troops in the first period of the war.

Back in October 1943, when I received my baptism of fire, fascist planes in clear weather hunted even small groups of our soldiers. One day when our group was crossing a large field, we saw an approaching German fighter. Fortunately, there was a large haystack nearby, behind which we hid. The fighter fired a machine-gun burst, and the hay burst into flames. When the plane rushed past, we sighed and got ready to move on. But then we saw that the fighter began to turn around and rushed towards us again... We ran behind the other side of the burning stack, which again saved us during the attack.

Now, in the middle of 1944, during heavy fighting on the Sandomierz bridgehead, when our defenses were broken through in many places and the troops began to retreat in disorder, we were relieved to see how, from our rear, a large number of IL-2 attack aircraft that suppressed the front line of the German offensive with bombs and rockets. Many German tanks caught fire, the fascist attack fizzled out, and our soldiers became bolder and were able to hold the bridgehead. Gradually, both sides moved to a defense in depth.

During the fighting, we had to liberate a number of Polish villages, whose inhabitants were hiding in the surrounding forests. When our troops appeared, they came out of their shelters and greeted us. According to them, their main hope is that the Germans do not drive out the Russians and come to Poland again. It was clear that the German occupation had reduced the Polish village, like ours, to extreme poverty. If someone's cow miraculously survived, they looked at him like he was a big lord.

We also had a bad time with food; often there was no time to deliver food to the unit. All of our people looked at the liberated Poles to see if they would treat us to something. However, they did not even think of sharing with us. If one of our people contacted them, I heard the same thing in response: "Nic nie mam, wszystko German zabral, a troszke - towarzysze bolszewicy..." I once couldn't stand it and said that it's not nice to blame the Bolsheviks on our comrades, because we were the first to enter their village, and no one took anything from them... By the way, I noticed that I was gradually beginning to understand the Polish language and I tried to use Polish words myself. For this I received a small reward: sometimes I was taken into the house, and the owner

would say to the hostess: "This is our Mr. Yurek , bring milk and something else for him to eat"...

Gradually the front line stabilized. We installed our gun not far from the front edge of the front, dug it in, camouflaged it and made a good dugout for cover. Everyone was in high spirits. The Allies have landed in France, which means things will go faster.

The autumn and winter of 1944-1945 were mild in Poland, there was almost no snow. From time to time we pulled out guns to rear positions to participate in exercises simulating future operations to break through enemy defenses. Then they took their "working" position again.

At night, each gun crew posted a sentry, who was replaced in turn. Only the battalion commander had a watch, so we wrote out the night duty schedule like this: we borrowed a watch from the battalion commander, checked where the Big and Little Dippers were located in relation to the frame of our dugout every 2-3 hours during the night, and then woke each other up at night such signs... When the nights were very dark, without stars, it was very difficult to navigate the guard, and the rustling sounds of crawling enemies seemed to come from everywhere...

One day, our battery received a command order to allocate one sergeant to study at an officer school in the Union. The battalion commander suggested to me: "As long as you study, the war will end." But since I did not plan to permanently serve in the army, I refused the offer. They found another gun commander who really wanted to send him. So I became a gun commander instead of the one who had gone home.

By the end of the year, food at the front became more and more difficult; food consisted of a piece of bread and gruel, no one knows what it was made of or what it was cooked on.

And then someone noticed that in the neutral zone between our trench and the German one there was a potato field. As a result, every night when there was no moon, two soldiers were equipped in turn, who crawled under fire and brought potatoes dug from the field, which were immediately baked.

Even the art master of the battery, Lukashkin, who was very cowardly, could not stand it and embarked on the same adventure, while wearing two cotton sweatshirts and an overcoat, in order, in his opinion, to protect himself from bullets...

On the evening of November 19, 1944, the battalion commander assembled the battery and announced that at exactly midnight all the guns on our front sector would open fire on the Germans for 5 minutes in order to show them "Kuzka's mother" in honor of the second anniversary of the start of the encirclement of Stalingrad, and also to disorient the Germans due to the change gun positions during shelling.

Each weapon had its own target. It was real fireworks of war. Hundreds of guns exploded simultaneously. The Germans apparently decided that our general offensive was beginning. However, after 5 minutes everything died down. We did not see the results of our fire, but we imagined that a huge number of fires had broken out in the German rear. Morally, I think the Germans sensed an impending disaster, since such a warning was sent to them...

From time to time, when the weather was clear, we observed a spectacular spectacle - large groups of American "flying fortress" bombers flew past us at a very high altitude, now on one side, now on the other, leaving traces of air inversions, carrying out shuttle operations along the England-USSR route and back to bomb German targets. Anti-aircraft guns fired at them from the German side of the front, but the shells did not reach the height of the bombers. These pictures inspired us and provided invaluable moral support at that time.

Due to the unusual calm at the front, everyone remembered the New Year 1945. There were rumors that on this occasion the fighters would be given 100 grams, but alas... We congratulated ourselves on the New Year. No one had any doubt that this would be the last year of the war.



Far from home

On January 12, 1945, the entire front began to move. Our battery took part in artillery preparation, moving to a direct fire position at night. On command, at dawn the end of the world began: a huge number of our guns fell on the German defense. The whole earth shook as if we were on a volcano. When the artillery barrage stopped and we followed the infantry and tanks, we saw the results of the shelling: the entire front edge of the German front line was plowed up like a giant plow, there were a huge number of dead Germans all around, and those who survived looked like they were crazy, many were bleeding from nose and ears. The complete superiority of our army over the German army has come. The front was broken through, and our troops rushed forward, sometimes even overtaking the retreating Germans. On one of these days, our battery, along with other units, tried to move as fast as our horses pulling the guns and ourselves had the physical strength.

Rushing through some small Polish town, we heard shouts from soldiers from other units that they had discovered a distillery nearby with full tanks of alcohol. Our attempts to turn towards the plant failed, as the battalion commander skillfully trotted the horses and people sitting on the guns.

After some time, when we had already passed the town, the art master Lukashkin, who was doing chores in the rear, caught up with us. He had a bicycle tube hanging over his shoulder, which he had filled with alcohol at the factory and closed with a valve. Where

he managed to get the camera and how he managed to catch up with us, he refused to answer. Many asked him to give them a taste of alcohol from the cell; he refused to everyone except the battalion commander.

In the following days, our unit stopped for the night in a Polish village, everyone fell dead and fell asleep. I don't know if they left sentries in our battery. We woke up from terrible shooting, and began to jump out of the houses in whatever clothes, but no one could understand anything, since the night was very dark. Screams were heard everywhere in Russian and German, shooting was carried out from all sides... It turned out that some German unit, retreating, dropped into a village already occupied by us. The Germans tried to break through to the West to join their own people, but they took the wrong route.

It was beginning to get light, and the situation was slowly becoming clearer. Our and German soldiers, caught in trouble, were lying all around on the street. One of the shot Germans was still moaning. Our art master Lukashkin ran up to him and shouted "Take it, you bastard! "Hit the German with the butt of a machine gun. As it turned out, the machine gun was on edge and upon impact spontaneously shot Lukashkin in the stomach. So he died without taking off his bicycle camera...

No one noticed where we crossed the German border. Having rushed through some forest paths at a fast pace, we suddenly found ourselves in a German town, where no one expected such surprise from the Russians. Panic began, the local population fled before our eyes, as best they could, in the direction of the West.

Ours had already managed to capture part of the town, when suddenly several German tanks appeared along the street, coming straight towards us with soldiers on their armor...

We managed to install the weapon in the gateway of a house. While my partner M. Gritzun and I were preparing for battle, we saw that except for the two of us there was no one left near the gun - the crew fled along with the riders and the infantry accompanying us... There was nowhere to go, it was too late to retreat, a head-on attack...

For some reason, Gritzun , while feeding a shell into the cannon barrel, kept muttering: "*Don't be afraid , calm down , don't be afraid !*" ... "

calmly hit the first tank that moved forward, which caught fire and blocked the road for others... The Germans began to run away from the tanks, and we added more fire to them. The Nazi attack failed...

And then, lo and behold, as if out of the ground, other guns and infantry appeared on our side again, the battle ended in our favor...

I was awarded the Order of the Red Star, which was usually awarded to officers.

At first, almost the entire German population fled to the Oder river along with the retreating Wehrmacht troops. There were only a few left - women, old people, children, the sick, they were all scared and thought that the Soviet troops would shoot them all. Their situation was truly catastrophic, since they had no food, and at the same time, all the shops and warehouses remained unlooted. The complete opposite of what happened when our and Polish cities changed hands.

In one of the German towns, abandoned by its inhabitants, we came across a photo studio. Since I was an amateur photographer, I requisitioned a camera with wide 6-centimeter film left there, bottles with developer and fixer, a printing press, a developing tank and photographic paper - in general, everything for the production of photographs. With the approval of the battalion commander, everything was placed on gun boxes for shells, which were monitored by the riders. Of course, everyone had to take pictures, so everyone took care of my darkroom very carefully.

One day our battery was firing, and I was developing film in the basement of a nearby house on assignment. Suddenly the battalion commander flew into the basement shouting: "Hurry, we're leaving immediately!" "I say: "It's a pity for the wet film, it will be lost"... We found a solution: we rolled a gun up to the house, I jumped on it, holding the film with both hands to dry. And other soldiers held me down so that I wouldn't fall. Then our riders rushed at full speed through the dust... Alas, I could not resist the shaking, flew off the cannon, and had to throw out the damaged film. The battalion commander scolded everyone because the bunglers could not restrain me...

It seemed that Berlin was already nearby, but further advance of our troops in March 1945 stopped due to fierce German resistance. The last time the front stopped in our sector was along the Neisse River, a tributary of the Oder. Deep trenches were dug on "our" high bank. There was relative calm, although both sides fired at each other.

Warm sunny days have arrived. It was nice to lie down in the sun under the cover of the earthen parapet of the trench.

Once I stood up to look out of the trench, I heard a shot from the other side, and I felt as if I had been hit on the back with a hammer in the right shoulder blade. I fell, the guys ran up and began to pull off my cotton sweatshirt, which had been pierced in the back by a bullet. I felt sick for a long time, my hand didn't move. When they took off the sweatshirt, they found a flattened bullet that had pierced the parapet and the sweatshirt and got stuck under the skin of the shoulder blade. They took it out, covered the wound with iodine and bandaged it. For several days I could not move my arm. This was not considered a wound.

And once, during an attack, I was saved by a box with a German razor in the left pocket of my tunic, where an enemy bullet hit...

The last offensive in April could no longer be called anything other than a massacre of the remnants of the once powerful German army. Their troops began to scatter after the hurricane of artillery fire, when no one on our side was counting either shells or cartridges. From that time on, the German population never fled anywhere...

Our regiment quickly approached the southern outskirts of Berlin. There, during one street battle, we could not determine where the German machine gun was firing at us from. I jumped into the empty house, onto the second floor, where there was a piano, and, lying on the floor, loudly strummed the instrument several times. In response, a machine gun burst hit the window, and with this the German shooter revealed himself and was attacked from our side...

And then we were turned to the South and given the order to rush to the rescue of Prague with all the speed possible. Moving south, we approached the city of Wittenberg on the right bank of the Elbe and there we unexpectedly came across hurricane fire from the Nazis. We have not encountered such an onslaught for a long time; it became impossible to advance further; many then died from sudden fire from the Nazis. It turned out that American troops were approaching the Elbe from the Western side, and the Germans decided not to allow us into the city in order to quickly surrender to the Americans, their last hope...

When the barrage of fire suddenly, as if on command, died down, we gradually began to emerge from our shelters and moved towards the banks of the Elbe.

Suddenly, American soldiers appeared on our shore, completely different from us - healthy, lice-free, not hungry guys in excellent shape. Compared to them, we looked like ragamuffins, dressed in different clothes... On my head, for example, there was a German pilot's helmet, some of ours wore German leather jackets...

The Americans warmly rushed to hug us and began offering us oranges and chocolate and cigarettes. Of course, no one refused. So no more than 15-20 minutes passed, when

suddenly a large group of our well-dressed officers and soldiers appeared in a hurry, who aggressively pushed us away from the Americans, demanding to immediately carry out the order for the rapid liberation of Prague.



On the way to Dresden, already in the dark we heard the earth tremble from a huge armada of Anglo-American “flying fortresses”, which began dropping bombs on the city right above us... There was a terrible howl from flying bombs, but no one was afraid anymore, so how we knew they were allies. Instantly the whole of Dresden burst into flames with a huge torch. Our entire column shouted: “Hurray for the allies, come on, guys! “However, we had to bypass the burning Dresden far away, so as not to fall into the nightmare and hell that the residents of this once beautiful city experienced...

They entered Czechoslovakia from the North, through the Ore Mountains, without fighting. For us, it was no longer a war, but a continuous holiday - the Czechs greeted us so warmly. It seemed that the entire population took to the streets where we passed. True, we did not look festive - dirty, tired, but joyful.

Before reaching Prague, our unit turned right towards the resort town of Karlsbad in order to forestall and cut off the retreat to the West for the surrender of a large group of SS units to the Americans, which included the remnants of the Vlasovites .

While our column was moving, in some Czech village there was a meeting of soldiers and the population on the occasion of the end of the war - this was already May 9... However, we were not allowed to stop, and after 2 days we took up a perimeter defense. Everyone was half asleep from fatigue when the last battle of the war began. The SS and Vlasov men, having gathered their last strength, desperately tried to break through several times. Only a few succeeded.

After 2 days it became quiet, the weapon stopped shooting. It was May 12, when the war ended for us... It is very sad that during these days, when the war officially stopped, so many of our soldiers died...

And a day later we entered Carlsbad (Karlovy Vary) and officially met with the Americans. I had just managed to photograph a group of our and American soldiers when the order was given to both sides to retreat each to their own bank of a small river flowing in the center of the city.

Home

The war with Germany was over. It was hard to look at the German residents who remained on their territory - women, children, old people, and disabled people. If half of our country was destroyed and the situation was very difficult, then Victory came, hopes for the best, lifting of spirit. And in the eyes of the Germans one could see a complete decline in physical strength and morale. We thought that it would be very difficult, if not impossible, for them to rise, since Germany was defeated at the fronts and by the aerial bombardment of our allies, and almost the entire remaining male population was captured. But the Germans had only themselves and their leaders to blame. Whoever started the war got what he deserved. As they say, *jedem das seine* ...

Soon our unit was urgently assembled and loaded onto a train heading to Kyiv. Everyone was pleased with the speedy meeting with the Motherland. We unloaded in the city of Fastov, a railway junction near Kyiv, and for a long time we could not understand what would happen to us next. A huge number of soldiers gathered at the transit point.

Seeing that this confusion would last for a long time, I climbed onto the roof of the train heading to Dnepropetrovsk, and, together with several of the same soldiers, drove home. Grandma, of course, wasn't expecting me, but how joyful it was!

Two days later he returned the same way to Fastov. I was called to the commandant, who asked why I didn't respond when a group was being assembled to be sent to the Far East. I said that I didn't hear anything, since it was a complete mess and very noisy... The commandant replied: "Now be more careful at roll calls..."

And a few days later we were loaded into freight cars, and the full train set off on a long journey...

After a month of dull travel, we reached some railway station, not reaching Vladivostok.

We spent several months in the Far East before the surrender of Japan, although our regiment did not participate in battles with Japan. They stood in reserve and fought more against scurvy in the deserted Ussuri taiga...

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In conclusion, I will add: I was very lucky, not very many ordinary soldiers who fought on the front line survived on the battlefields - more and more militias replaced millions of dead, maimed, wounded, and lost health, ensuring victory for the country...

It is unlikely that future generations will be able to make up for the human losses that Russia suffered...

The truth of war is worse than what is shown to us in movies and written in works of fiction; life has other scenarios...

© Yuri A.K., guard sergeant

Moscow, 1998

P.S. Publisher's Note:

Let us remember the attitude of the state towards war veterans, especially in “perestroika -reformed” feudal-capitalist Russia, but this is a separate topic...

In addition, neither the families of those killed, nor the soldiers who survived the hell of war, nor former prisoners of war, nor war invalids, nor the population living in the occupied territories of the USSR, deprived of property and means of subsistence, received any compensation from Germany and international organizations: apparently, did not fall into the category of “victims of Nazism”...

Annotation :

~ Through the eyes of a soldier. Military memoirs.

Memoirs of a veteran of the Great Patriotic War. Written by a direct participant in those events - the way they were perceived then, through the eyes of a young sergeant who walked and crawled along the roads and fields of a terrible war, from the Dnieper to the Elbe - without embellishment or political speculation...

The author is not a writer, but an ordinary, well-educated person. At the same time, his style of memoirs is not entirely ordinary, not standard, does not reflect the official attitude, it is independent and individual. The value of these memoirs lies in the simplicity, sincerity, immediacy of the author's perception, the absence of journalistic or literary clichés; the presentation does not overwhelm with specific military themes.

The book reflects the inexperienced view of a young man thrown from the threshold of school into the thick of war, onto the front line, where the chances of survival are decreasing every day, and victory is oh so far away...

Illustrations (photos) from the waralbum website. ru



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